

BLOFIELD RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

REPORT of the Medical Officer of Health for the year 1910.

To the Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen of the
Blofield Rural District Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit the following report on the health and sanitary condition of your District for the year 1910.

POPULATION.

It has been found convenient for many years when dealing with statistics of the District to exclude altogether the population of the County Asylum, and this practice will be followed in the present report.

During the census decennial period 1891-1901 the population of the District decreased by just 3000, and in estimating the population to the middle of each year subsequent to 1901 I have considered that the same rate of decrease has been maintained. If this has been actually the case, 10,658, my estimate of the population to the middle of 1910 will be found correct by the coming census returns. There are indications however that this may be contradicted by the figures shortly to be published, for in many villages the housing accommodation is now barely sufficient for the inhabitants, and in some others new cottages have been built and occupied. Building however, has been most active in those villages with railway stations, and the houses designed for the accommodation of persons of independent means driven to the country by the high rates prevailing in the towns. On the other hand, some cottages have fallen into decay and become uninhabitable, the birth rate has been low, and there has been a continuance of the migration of young persons from the country to the towns and colonies in search of employment. Taking all these factors into consideration, there is, I think, a probability that the census of 1911 will show a less decided decrease in the population of the District than was evidenced by the previous census. For statistical purposes it is perhaps better to rely on the definite figures afforded by the census returns than to take an estimate based on such varied and uncertain data.

BIRTHS.

The number of births registered was 235, giving a birth-rate of 22.0 per 1000. This is considerably below the average both for this District and for Rural Districts generally,

There were 19 illegitimate births, the western half of the District contributing 11 to the total.

DEATHS.

The number of deaths registered was 130 and the death-rate stands at 12.2. This low death-rate combined with the fact that, with the exception of one death from influenza, there were no deaths from infectious diseases must be considered eminently satisfactory.



INFANTILE MORTALITY.

There were but 14 deaths of infants under one year of age during the year. This gives the remarkably low infantile mortality rate of 59.5 per 1000 births and establishes an easy record for the last ten years. I will not attempt to offer an explanation of this happy state of affairs, as it would very possibly be nullified by the experience of future years. There has been no bonus offered to mothers for successfully rearing their infants, and so far as I can learn the number of insurance policies taken out for infants has not diminished.

An analysis of the causes of death makes the figures even more remarkable, as it will be found by reference to Table V that seven out of the fourteen deaths were attributed to premature birth. There were therefore only seven infants who, with a fair start in the race of life, succumbed in the first year. Four of these died from marasmus or debility and none from infectious diseases.

OLD AGE MORTALITY.

The age at death of 69 persons was over 65 years, and as the total number at all ages was only 130 more than half had attained this age.

ZYMOTIC DISEASE.

Cases notified 30. Rate per 1000 population (including Asylum)
2.5. No fatal case.

Distribution of Notified Infectious Disease.

<u>Locality</u>	<u>Enteric</u>	<u>Diphtheria</u>	<u>Scarlet Fever.</u>	<u>Erysipelas</u>	<u>Totals.</u>
Acle (Marsh)		1			1
Blotfield	1	1	1		3
Braydeston		6		1	7
Brundall		1		1	2
Buckenham			3		3
Burlingham		2			2
Freethorpe				1	1
Lingwood		5			5
Moulton				1	1
Thorpe		1	2		3
Workhouse		1		1	2
Totals	1	18	6	5	30

It will be seen from the above table that the number of cases of infectious disease notified during the year has been exceptionally small. The type of disease in every instance was mild and not a single death has to be recorded. Considerably more than half the total number were cases of diphtheria, many of which presented no definite clinical signs of the disease, and were only notified after the bacillus had been discovered in swabs.

There has been an equally small amount of non-notifiable infectious disease in the District and it will be seen by a reference to Table IV that there have been no deaths from either Whooping cough or Measles, a rare occurrence in the District.

ENTERIC FEVER.

One case of enteric fever was notified from Blofield. The source of infection was not discovered. Its management presented no difficulties.

DIPHTHERIA.

Although the total number of eighteen cases appears large when compared with records of former years, it must be remembered that many now notified would not have been discovered but for the recently introduced system of bacteriological diagnosis. The true nature of a whole group of six or seven cases occurring in a row of cottages at Braydestone would have remained unknown had not the bacteriological examination of swabs taken from the throats of the children revealed the presence of the diphtheria bacillus.

Five cases notified from Lingwood extending over a period of three months (June to August) were all of a mild character.

The remaining cases were scattered and independent of each other. Dr. Claridge of St. Giles Plain, Norwich, acts as Bacteriologist to the Council. Swabs sent by medical practitioners desiring bacteriological aid in the diagnosis of doubtful cases are examined and reported on at the cost of the District Council.

Prophylactic injections of anti-toxin are given where considered necessary on the recommendation of the Medical Officer of Health; the practitioner giving the injection provides the anti-toxin and receives a fee of five shillings for each injection.

No child after having suffered from diphtheria is permitted to return to school until shown by bacteriological examination to be free from infection. A fee of 2/6 is paid to the medical practitioner attending the patient for taking swabs for this purpose.

The Diphtheria Anti-toxin (outside London) Order, 1910 was reported on and considered by the Council on Sept. 13th, but up to the present no action in connection with this Order has been taken.

SCARLET FEVER.

This disease did not appear in epidemic form and only six cases were notified during the year. Three of these occurred in one family living in Buckenham, the infection having been introduced by a visitor convalescent from the disease. The remaining three cases were sporadic. There were no fatal cases.

MEASLES.

Although, as has been already stated, no deaths resulted from this disease, the District was not altogether free from Measles.

At the beginning of the year some cases were reported among children attending the Lingwood School. In February and March Thorpe St. Andrew was visited by a rather severe epidemic, necessitating the closing of the school. This was followed in April by an epidemic in the neighbouring village of Postwick where the school was closed from April 4th to April 25th. At the end of this month a very sudden outbreak occurred among the children attending the small school at Ranworth. Twenty children out of a total of forty nine on the books were reported ill on one day.

The school was immediately closed and as might be expected the epidemic soon burnt itself out. The infection happily did not spread to other villages. For the remainder of the year, with the exception of a small outbreak at Buckenham and Hassingham, the District was free from Measles.

WHOOPING COUGH.

There was a remarkable absence of this malady throughout the year. No death was registered as due to this disease and no school was closed on account of its prevalence.

INFLUENZA.

One death only occurred from Influenza, the patient being well advanced in life. In the month of February a large number of children attending Moulton school suffered from a peculiar form of sore throat attended with high temperature. Investigation of the outbreak showed diphtheria to be absent, and from other considerations it became clear that the disease was one of the many varieties of influenza.

TUBERCULOSIS.

There were but four deaths from Pulmonary Phthisis, giving a Phthisis death-rate of .37. Three deaths were registered as due to other tubercular diseases, bringing the Tubercular death-rate up to .65.

I have received no notification of any "poor person" suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis under the Public Health (Tuberculosis) Regulations, 1908. Altogether the tuberculosis record for the year is satisfactory.

The action taken, when occasion arises, under the Public Health (Tuberculosis) Regulations, 1908 was described in my last year's Annual Report. I would add that, in order that the disease may be recognised in its early stages, it would be an advantage if poor law medical officers were granted the help of a bacteriological examination of sputum at the cost of the Council.

CANCER.

Twenty five deaths were due to malignant disease, which gives a cancer death-rate of 2.34 per 1000 population. In 1909 the cancer death-rate was only .46.

PLAGUE.

No case of plague has been notified. Two dead hares and one in a dying condition were discovered by a Yarmouth sportsman on the Acle marshes on Dec. 17th. One of these hares was sent for examination to the Medical Officer of the Local Government Board and reported by him to be free from the bacillus pestis.

No organised action has been taken in the District with respect to the destruction of rats.

SMALLPOX.

The District has been free from this disease.

VACCINATION.

The following are the vaccination statistics for the year.



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In the Blofield Sub-District.

Primary vaccinations	97
Exempted under Conscience Clause	28
Summonses.	0

In the South Walsham Sub-District.

Primary vaccinations89
Exempted under the Conscience Clause16
Summonses	0

SANITARY CONDITION OF THE DISTRICT.

WATER SUPPLY.

I have nothing to add to the general description of the water supply given in my Annual Report for the year 1908. Three wells have been cleaned out and repaired during the year.

I desire, however, to draw attention to the fact that Sect. 6 of the Public Health (Water) Act, 1878 is entirely disregarded by owners of property in the District (not excepting the Norfolk County Council). This Section of the Act provides, under a penalty not exceeding ten pounds, that the owner of any newly erected dwelling house shall not permit it to be occupied until a certificate has been obtained from the Sanitary Authority that there is "within a reasonable distance of the house, an available supply of wholesome water sufficient for the consumption and use for domestic purposes of the inmates of the house."

There are no doubt but few instances in this District of new houses being built and occupied without the provision of a proper water supply, but the fact of an application being made for the certificate in each case would afford opportunity for the systematic inspection of the sanitary arrangements of every new house, and further would give the information necessary to form a correct estimate of the number of dwelling houses built each year.

DRAINAGE.

Few of the villages in the District have any pretensions to a system of drainage.

The drains in Acle and Blofield have been working efficiently and no nuisance has arisen from them.

In Freethorpe the addition of a few more yards of piping would be an improvement.

In Thorpe St. Andrew the actual work of construction has not yet been begun, but the necessary legal preliminaries have been advanced a stage during the past year.

HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING ACT 1909.

At the close of the year a Committee was formed for the consideration of this Act. In accordance with Article III of the Order of the Local Government Board Sept. 2nd 1910, sheets with headings corresponding to those given in Art. II and III have been provided for records of inspections of dwelling houses. I have, as your Medical Officer of Health, furnished a list of forty two dwelling houses "the early inspection of which is, in the opinion of the Medical Officer of Health, desirable."

No further action than this was taken by your Council during the year 1910. No doubt in the coming year the Council will take further steps in carrying out the provisions of this Act.

In addition to the clauses relating to the building of cottages out of public funds in those villages where the housing accommodation is insufficient, the Act provides for passing in review before the Council the sanitary condition of every cottage and yard in the District, and full powers have been granted to the Council for dealing with any insanitary condition discovered. Cottages found unfit for human habitation may be closed, and under certain circumstances demolished.

From the records kept of inspections made, it is my duty at the end of each year to make a return in my Annual Report of the work accomplished under the Act.

SUPERVISED PREMISES.

Byelaws for Slaughter houses have been in force for many years, and although in some instances the premises are inconveniently situated, complaints of nuisance arising from them are rare.

The bake-houses are kept in a satisfactory condition.

Byelaws with respect to Cowsheds and Dairies were adopted some years ago, but in too many instances the construction of the cowsheds is such that it is impossible for the byelaws to be put in operation. Legislation to control the milk supply seems ever near at hand, but is constantly postponed. On this account principally very active measures have not been taken to improve the construction of the cowsheds up to the level required by the byelaws which have been adopted for use in the District.

PRIVIES AND ASHPITS.

Eight new privies have been built; one with a shallow bin, the remainder on the pail system. The work of improving old fashioned privies with deep insanitary bins has continued. Forty six of these have been converted to the pail system, and in twenty three instances the deep bin has been filled up and a surface bin substituted. By these alterations the sanitary surroundings of a great many cottages have recently been much improved, but often the work is done in an expensive and not very satisfactory way through the local builder being ignorant of sanitary requirements. I would again ask the Council to consider the question of having copies printed of the admirable plans for new privies which have been drawn to scale by the Inspector of Nuisances. These would be of great assistance to owners of property who are required to alter existing privies or build new ones, and also the means of saving unnecessary expense as well as insuring that the work was done on right principles.

THE NUISANCE AT POSTWICK.

In the early Summer a serious nuisance and danger to the public health, arising from the deposit of refuse from the City of Norwich on the bank of the river opposite to the village of Postwick, attracted considerable attention.

For several months the village had suffered from a horrible stench arising from this huge heap of decomposing refuse, and during the short spell of hot weather in June there was added to the nuisance of the smell a veritable plague of house flies. The flies swarmed into dwelling houses, settling on articles of food, and when it became known that they originated from the refuse heap, fears were entertained that they would bring with them germs of infectious disease.

Dr. Copeman, a Medical Officer of the Local Government Board, made a prolonged stay in Postwick investigating the whole circumstance of the nuisance, more particularly with reference to the question of the refuse heap being the breeding ground of the flies. I regret the Council have not been furnished with a copy of Dr. Copeman's Report, which must have been an exceedingly interesting one, but I believe that the experiments carried out by him left no doubt as to the identity of the Postwick flies with those bred on the dust heap more than a thousand yards away.

In the course of my many visits to Postwick I became aware that the village suffered from a second stench, differing in character from that arising from the refuse heap, the source of which was the sludge trenches of the Norwich sewage farm situated still further to the South. Odours from these two distinct sources would both be wafted by the same Southerly breezes and might well be mistaken by the villagers the one for the other. The odour from the sludge trenches is however more pungent and penetrating, and of greater volume than that from the refuse heap, and quite unmistakable to a connoisseur.

On the dust heap more care has been taken to cover with the silt from street gullies the decomposing refuse and paraffin has been sprinkled on the surface with the view of destroying the larvae of the flies. It is doubtful if these measures will be altogether successful in abating the nuisance, and, should hot weather prevail in the Summer, it is not unlikely that the smell and the flies will again be in evidence.

REEDHAM.

Reedham has been considered as a "separate locality" in my Annual Reports for the reason that the parish suffered under the reproach of being one of the most insanitary villages in the District, and one from which infectious disease was rarely absent. A properly constituted Parochial committee was formed to deal with its sanitary matters on the spot, but there having been no call for this committee to act for so long a time, its very existence is now forgotten. The records of the occurrence of infectious disease also clearly show that the village has fully redeemed its character and may now be considered to rank in point of healthiness with the rest of the District. I do not therefore propose in future Reports to consider it as a "separate locality."

The population of Reedham estimated to the middle of 1910 is 803.

The number of births 16, and deaths 15.

No case of infectious disease has been notified during the year.

THORPE ST ANDREW

Population, Census 1891	1317 (without Asylum)
" " 1901	1507 (" ")
Average Annual rate of increase	19.
Estimated population middle of 1910 - 1690	
Births 37	Birth-rate 21.8
Deaths 14	Death-rate 8.2
Zymotic death-rate	0

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

The village suffered from a severe epidemic of Measles in February and March, but of notified infectious disease there were only two cases of scarlet fever and one of diphtheria. There were no deaths from infectious disease.

DRAINAGE.

Progress has been made in the preliminary work necessary before any extensive scheme of drainage can be put into operation. Negotiations for the purchase of land and rights of way have been made, and the contracts approved by the Local Government Board

SCAVENGING.

The scavenging of the village continues to be carried out in an efficient manner.

NEW BUILDINGS.

Four new cottages have been built during the year.

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS ACT, 1901.

A Table dealing with matters under this Act is attached to this Report.

I have the honour to remain,

Your obedient Servant,

H. H. BACK M.B. (Lond:)

Medical Officer of Health to the

Ellofield Rural District Council.

Acle,
Norfolk.

March 1911.

